

Listening for Feeling



"When I listen and understand, I give the best gift I can give someone." ~Anonymous

Leaders need to be excellent listeners because each time a person talks, there are actually two messages being sent. Part of a message is content (what is literally said). The other part is the feeling, or the emotions behind the words. Remarkably, most of what we say in face-to-face communication is communicated non-verbally (without words). Research indicates that during conversations, the message is communicated 7% by words, 38% by tone of voice and 55% by body language (gestures, facial expressions, posture, etc.). Being a good listener requires both intellectual and emotional involvement.

When our social & emotional needs are being met, we feel...

CONFIDENT Curious; Empowered; Open; Proud; Involved
GRATEFUL Appreciative; Moved; Sympathetic; Thankful
JOYFUL Optimistic; Encouraged; Pleased; Amused
INSPIRED Eager; Awe; Enthusiastic; Dazzled; Vibrant
PEACEFUL Calm; Rejuvenated; Safe; Trusting; Fulfilled

When our social & emotional needs are NOT being met, we feel...

AFRAID Shocked; Panicked; Worried; Suspicious
ANGRY Impatient; Frustrated; Resentful; Furious
DISCONNECTED Aloof; Distant; Bored; Numb; Detached
EMBARRASSED Ashamed; Heartbroken; Flustered; Lonely
SAD Anxious; Discouraged; Hopeless; Edgy

Paraphrasing *Communicating what you think someone said and how they felt or are feeling*

- If I understand you right, you felt _____.
- When _____ happened, it sounds like you felt _____.
- You were feeling pretty _____?
- I felt _____ in a similar situation. Is that how you felt?
- It seems to me you are feeling _____.
- Tell me more about why you felt _____.

Activity Directions:

1. Form into small groups of 3-4 people. When someone feels the courage to tell a story regarding a time at school when their social and emotional needs were NOT being met, they say:
"I'm ready to tell my story, please listen to me."
2. The storyteller tells the story BUT does not identify the "feeling" behind the story. The story is just told. The listeners look and listen for the non-verbal cues. The non-verbal cues (tone of voice and body language) are the clues that will indicate how the storyteller felt at the time or is currently feeling.
3. When the storyteller is done, volunteers attempt to paraphrase the "feeling" behind the story. Use the suggested paraphrasing sentence stems or create one of your own. After the paraphrasers have attempted to explain what they felt the storyteller was feeling, the storyteller reveals what feeling they had experienced in the story.
4. A new storyteller says, "I'm ready to tell my story, please listen to me."

Summary Questions

- What did it feel like to be the talker? What was it like to be the listener?
- How could you tell what people were feeling? Was it easy or hard for you?
- Do you know students at your school who are feeling afraid, embarrassed, angry, disconnected or sad? What do you think is causing these feelings?
- How can you, as student leaders, help other students get their social and emotional needs met so they feel confident, grateful, joyful, inspired or peaceful?